

Uhhmm

Business



“ Uhm,” teachers hate it.

Students love it. But love or hate it, everyone has had that dread- ed moment in front of 30 pupils in class, when you’re stuck with no words but “ uhm”. Wikipedia calls this “ speech disfluency”, which is broken up into three sections: false starts, fillers and repaired ut- terances. This article mainly focuses on fillers, as this is the section with which most students have problems. Fillers are meaningless words or sentences, mainly used to just fill the silence. These are the words you’ll be hearing towards the end of someone’s unprepared speech, when he/she has simply run out of meaningful things to say.

Words such as “ uhm”, “ err”, “ like” and “ sorta” are commonly-used fillers. An easy way to avoid using fillers is to keep your sentences short and sweet. The longer the sentence, the more likely it is that you’ll pause and add a few fillers. Any “ okay”, “ you know”, “ like” and “ well” should be avoided if it’s not bringing any partic- ular meaning to the sentence. Fillers also act as placeholders. They indicate that, yes, you don’t know what you want to say, but no, you’ve not finished speaking yet.

Letting the well-known “ uhm” slip, gives you a mo- ment or two to think about or recall what you were going to or wanted to say. This also ensures that your anxious audience won’t burst out laughing in the dead silence. If you’ve run out of things to say, though, it’s best to steer clear of fillers, as they make you seem anxious and self-conscious. Many educators automatically penalise for this and call it “ un- prepared” or even “ not

fluent". These words are never intentionally written in a speech, as they bring no content or information.

Thus these words should be avoided, as they make you seem unprepared, nervous and a lot less of a good speaker than you could possibly be.